

**ADDRESS OF DEAN RUSSELL BEFORE THE SOCIETY  
OF SUPERINTENDENTS OF TRAINING-SCHOOLS  
FOR NURSES, NEW YORK, MAY, 1900**

LADIES: When the proposition was made by your committee a year or more ago that we should consider some form of advanced training for nurses, the whole subject was so new to me that I scarcely knew what to do or which way to turn. Since that time I have been rather industriously visiting hospitals and making inspections from the outside with a view to securing some notion of the scope of your work. I must confess that I was ignorant of what was expected of the superintendent until I had seen with my own eyes some of the work which you are doing; until I had seen that, I could form no notion of what was expected from you.

As I look into it more and more, I confess that I am surprised that it does not differ to a greater degree from the work which we are called upon to do in so many lines of educational activity.

In the first place, the Teachers' College is not a normal school in any sense of the term. Normal schools are State institutions to equip teachers for work in the public schools of the State. Our work, if it could be characterized at all in connection with these, is to train teachers for normal schools. That involves many lines of work aside from that of public education. So far as our work touches the normal school at all, it is as a special preparation for teachers who will go into normal schools to instruct those who are to become teachers. We make a requirement for admission of a complete normal training, or so much of a college course as may be necessary to enter on the advanced work we have to give. That sets the pace for the institution and puts it above the normal school. That same standard we are trying to maintain in all other work which runs beyond that of the public school. We have advanced training for those going into kindergarten, primary, or elementary public schools and for those going into high schools. But it is all of an advanced grade, rather than what would be given in a normal school. You can see the reason for that.

There is no use of university education coming in competition with the State schools. Our work is limited, even though it does take in this broad scope. Our work is narrowly limited, because it is impossible that there should be any such number of teachers qualified to become teachers of normal schools, or superintendents or supervisors of schools, as there are of teachers actually engaged in the class-room. That at once limits the scope and the nature of our work.

Besides this work which relates to public education, we are carrying

on courses in fine arts, domestic art and domestic science, and manual training. This brings us in touch with all phases of public-school education.

Many of those who take our course in domestic art go out as teachers in mission schools as missionaries. We have at present three daughters of foreign missionaries now taking that course who are expecting to return to that work. They are taking art, manual training, cooking, and domestic art work with a view of introducing industrial education among the people to whom they go.

At the same time we are looking to the training of specialists who will go out as supervisors, or, as frequently happens, to reform and industrial schools. I have had applications for widely different types all the way from the Florence Crittenden Home of San Francisco,—where a woman was wanted to take charge of the rescue work,—to women wanted to take charge of cooking and sewing in the House of Correction in Rhode Island. We have received an application within a week for a teacher for the feeble-minded, for work among the defectives. We have sent one or two to the George Junior Republic at Freeville, New York, where they work with street arabs from New York. We have four or five at Hampton, Virginia, where they are devoting themselves to the problem of industrial and normal training for negroes. I mention this to show that the work which we are trying to do has many phases. It is because the scope of our work is so large, and because we have so many special lines of work, that it is at all possible to take over this work of yours. I am not sure, as the course develops, but it will be necessary to work out one or two new lines, as your needs may suggest. But I am very confident that for many years to come, until your profession, as well as all teaching professions, shall have advanced far beyond the stage of to-day, the work that we shall be called upon to do for you will be what we are giving to others,—dividing it differently, giving some special term to it, to meet the peculiar needs which are to be found in this particular work.

I want to say a few words regarding the problem of training teachers in general. There are two kinds of professional training which can be given. I mention two, but it is difficult to draw the line between vocational and professional work.

In the first place, the world needs people who can do thoroughly well things within a certain sphere, carpenters, stonemasons, etc., as well as contractors, builders, and architects. It frequently happens in our industrial economy that the work which one person or one class of persons is called upon to do can be done as it ought to be done, thoroughly, only when a major portion of the man's or woman's life is devoted to that specific operation; when it requires a high degree of skill or manual

dexterity, then it is possible to acquire that only by long practice. The laws of habit are so fixed and depend so much on the physical substratum that you cannot expect a man or woman to come into that class of work immediately. It needs tremendous training and a great deal of it. This training, which is founded on habit and must obey the laws of habit, almost always comes under leadership, and it is strange to see how far this can be followed. Think of ancient Egypt, for example, where some of the best work that has ever been done was done, training not only for industrial pursuits, but for statesmanship, for military service, for the fine arts. All this training was of the nature of which I have been speaking. It was founded on habit and developed through practice. It is the wonder and despair of the modern world that the ancient world, as we know it, should have done so much; that it should have been possible thousands of years ago to quarry those massive blocks of stone, to transport them hundreds of miles, and to build them into the pyramids with joints so nicely fashioned that it is impossible to insert a penknife blade after these thousands of years. We recall with what difficulty even in this age Cleopatra's Needle, one of those massive blocks of stone, was transferred to New York. The men who did that work so accurately, and who kept on doing it for thousands of years through their descendants, were men trained in the school of experience, and yet always under a master, that master telling them first of all what to do, and then carrying them through every gradation of their work. The result, you will see, is eminently satisfactory from the stand-point of workmanship. One reason why we have so much trouble in industrial life is that our workmen are so incompetent. There is strike on strike, friction between capital, as we say, and labor, between employer and employed, because the employer is conscious of the fact that the workman is not doing as he ought to do. The skilled workman who can do the thing just as it ought to be done, and do it on time and accurately, is not striking; he has steady employment as a rule.

All are losing something of what has gone before, the apprentice system,—the long apprenticing of boys and girls to master workmen, where they are brought under the immediate supervision of those master workmen for from three to five years. We must have the essential characteristics of this kind of training. The apprentice system for vocational and professional work has covered ninety-nine per cent. of all that has ever been given.

When you think about it, what is it? Let us analyze it. In the first place, you have the apprentice and the man who knows; the one who wants to learn and the one who has the skill at hand so that it can be transferred to the other person. What is done first of all? The master

workman puts before the apprentice the ideal of what is to be done. That may come in the form of a model, in the form of a drawing, in the form of a statement of what is to be done. At any rate, the teacher tells the pupil what is to be done.

In the next place, he shows the pupil how to do it. He shows him how to handle the saw or plane, and guides the hand until the proper motion is made, the proper attitude of body is secured, and he will give him some directions. He shows him what to do, how to do it, and, third,—just as important,—he sees to it that it is done, and that it is done in the manner shown and to reach the end desired. And he insists upon it and insists upon it, hour after hour, day after day, year after year, until the habit is fixed. That is the gist of the apprentice system, training founded on habit which begets this definite, precise workmanship, on which ninety-nine per cent. of what has been done in the past is based. We have abandoned it to a large degree, and yet it is all about us. How is it with the girl in the home? As she grows up she is required to do a certain thing, is told how to do it, is shown how to do it, and year after year that girl is trained, if trained at all, in doing it. Think of the making of bread in the homes all over this country. The necessity for economy, the tastes of the family, the traditions in the family, the customs there, determine that the girl shall do as her mother does, and so the mother is watching that she does not waste anything and that she does everything just so. The daughter follows in the steps of the mother in the house, and the son follows in the steps of the father on the farm.

Think of what happens in our business affairs. Everywhere we see that there is training by experience, practical experience, which is apprentice training. Even when the person does it himself unaided, he must have some motive to do something worth doing, something to spur him on until a habit is fixed. When you sum up life and realize how much of what we are depends on this apprentice way of doing things, you will be inclined to think that much of the best part of workmanship is dependent on this apprentice method. We cannot put it aside. It is something for us to use in a higher way when that way becomes possible.

I have spoken of the advantages. It has enormous advantages,—the advantages of accuracy, of precision, of definiteness. It has another great advantage. When you look at the individual who is a master workman as a result of this training, you find that he does his work with little expenditure of energy. That is an advantage to him, and he can do it much more quickly. Think of riding the wheel. Think of the energy spent the first few times you tried to mount. You put work and muscle enough into that little machine to drive a factory and you felt it in your muscles the next day, but after a few weeks of trial the ease with which

that is accomplished, the small amount of energy required, is simply surprising.

But there are disadvantages; first of all, it tends to narrow the individual's horizon. If one's life is guided by habit, as the thing becomes easier, as he gets to do it better, this is strange, but true, he gets to do it with less thought, with less consciousness. That is where the ease comes in. The spinal cord takes care of it, and the brain knows nothing about it unless something goes wrong. The higher part of the man is quiescent. So in time it narrows the individual unless there is some other inspiration, some outside attraction that can be brought in.

There is, however, a still greater loss from the stand-point of society at large, and that is a certain stagnation. As this apprentice system is brought up to a certain standard, individuals will be brought up to that standard, and just so surely will they be stopped there. The mother is not going to permit the daughter to try elaborate experiments, because she cannot afford it. The master workman does not permit his apprentice to experiment with the work he has to do, because the work he has to do is something that must not be spoiled. More than that, the superior master dominates the inferior at every stage, and it is an extraordinary case when the inferior rises superior to the master. As a class of apprentices they are brought up to a certain level and then stopped.

When any considerable number in society reach that stage we have a stagnant civilization. It was for that reason that it was possible for Egypt to maintain its dead level of social life for four or five thousand years. It is the same reason that has made it possible for China to keep on that level for more than four thousand years. It is because of the apprentice system ingrained there.

You can apply this to professional life. You can apply it to your own work. You can apply it to teaching. It is necessary in every vocation, I take it; it is certainly necessary in every profession that there be standards of excellence, and that every one, so far as possible, who is engaged in this work shall be brought up to that standard of excellence; that he shall be able to do certain things thoroughly well; that he shall know exactly how to do them, and shall be kept in training until he shall do them almost automatically.

That suggests that the greater part of the training for any profession must be on the apprentice order,—that is, any profession that takes in the whole scope of the work. You may improve them. Think of the physician. The physician is not a professional worker in the sense that he has all to do. The physician occupies a position which is quite unique, in which he is merely superior and inspector of something to be done. His work differs from the teacher's work in that. He touches

the patient at certain definite times. He occupies the position of supervisor. He is not, like the teacher, in constant touch with those who are to be benefited by his ministrations. That shows that while it is necessary in even the physician's profession that he shall have certain technical skill and a great deal of it, it is always in a certain line. He must have the clinical work, but it must be given under the form of apprenticeship, under the immediate supervision of the superior directing the matter.

Take your own work. You are brought in immediate contact with the patient and are compelled to be with that patient, where the physician only touches him at stated intervals. It falls to you to do certain things; you have to do those things quickly, accurately, precisely, in a skilful manner always. You are successful in your professional work just in proportion as you can do those things well. There is no way of gaining that skill and precision and definiteness except by the apprentice system of training so long as we are constituted as we are. It must be done in that manner. There must be someone to tell you what to do, to show you how to do, and to insist upon your doing it in this prescribed manner, until you have acquired the habit of doing it easily and successfully.

Is there anything more, then, in the profession? If that is all there is to any profession, it makes that professional work, or tends to make it, a stagnant profession. It may last a long time and be very accurate and workmanlike in all that it accomplishes, but it will stand at a certain level and remain there indefinitely. It is only when there are those who can rise superior to it, who can see what is to be done from the outside and can carry it to a higher plane, that progress for the profession as well as for the individual is brought about.

It is not for the rank and file of the teaching profession that we are working. It is for the few who can spend time and money in raising themselves to the next higher stage, that they may better themselves and help the profession on. So we cannot take over the training of nurses. That must be done in the nurses' training-school and very largely on the lines which I have suggested. That is inevitable. But it is also necessary that those who are to teach should not be as blind as those who are being led, lest they both fall into the ditch. For those who are to teach, who are to look to the raising of the profession, must have a training superior to those who are with them in the profession. They must go beyond that which they have achieved in order to bring the pupils up to and beyond the industrial or apprentice grade.

After four or five years the apprentice can often do just as good work as the master and is capable of earning good wages. But that is not professional. That does not provide for professional advance. Some-

thing beyond must come in. I am not certain what can come in in this case, but I take it that one thing that we can do is to train teachers to be better teachers. That is to apply in behalf of the teaching this apprentice principle. I think it would be an immense advantage to the teacher to know what those principles are and how to apply them if you are to get the best results. That is a part of the course. It must naturally save a great many mistakes and shorten much the period of apprenticeship to have an able teacher. We all know that.

You have your training now. You come into ward management after some years, when you have acquired some eminence in your work, and then you are called upon to teach. You may be removed five to ten years from your own training when you are called upon to do teaching, and it is not to be expected that teaching under those circumstances will always be very good. The teaching power is to a large extent a gift. There is no amount of training that can make a good teacher out of a naturally poor teacher. If the teacher is not a pretty good teacher to start with, or has not the teacher's gift, the teacher's sympathy, you cannot make a teacher of him by teaching. It is hopeless. You can make a good teacher a better teacher by training, and it is for that that the teacher's training-class comes into play.

There is another course which would be valuable. All of us who go through the various stages of professional work, beginning at the bottom and working up till we are able to take a commanding position, are hampered by the fact that our horizon is limited, is narrow. We can see farther when we look up than in any other direction. A person who has worked in this position and learned to do it well, and goes into another position and learns to do that well, is not in the best imaginable position to take a *commanding* place, because he may not have a wide horizon. It must be that in a great establishment like a hospital, where you come into such immediate and intimate contact with people whose occupations are widely different from yours, a wider outlook is the great essential. So a course has been provided for hospital management. We find similar courses necessary for superintendents of schools. It is absolutely necessary for any person who, having come through various stages, finds herself in a position to take a commanding place.

Then there are the scientific principles on which all professional and vocational work rest. You are dealing with the sciences of physiology and anatomy and hygiene, with principles of chemistry in cooking and sanitation, with principles of physics in many instances in practical ways, and there ought to be an opportunity of making special studies and special investigations. A familiarity with the field must be gained if the professional work is to be added to the vocational. I do not know

of any better way of drawing the line—which I said I would not draw—between the two than this. If the work that has to be done is work that can be done effectively and efficiently by the apprentice system, I think then you have a vocation as a result. If, now, that vocation is of such a nature that the person who is engaged in it has time and ability to go farther, can reach fundamental principles, can come to understand the foundation-stones of that structure, is capable of seeing this work of the vocational stripe in its true perspective, and understand why it is so and why it must be so and ought to be so, and then has the additional knowledge or genius of knowing when to put in a peg here and peg there on which you can hang something more, then the work becomes professional. Progress is dependent on successful experimentation in new lines. This is a thing that we often forget. It can never be haphazard work. It is just as essential that the inventor see the principle of his invention before he tries to realize it as that he should know the material that he is to work with. You cannot experiment unless you know something of what you expect to accomplish. When Elias Howe conceived the idea of running a thread through a loop and bringing that up through the cloth, there was the sewing-machine. It was all done in that one idea, or the idea that lay back of it. He could not have formulated that in his mind unless he had been familiar by personal training with some other kind of sewing or mechanics involved in the operation. That known, he could experiment in other directions and with other materials.

Not until a nurse is in a position to imagine new situations and new ways of doing things and new devices to accomplish what has been accomplished in some other way, not till she can see her way pretty clearly, is there any reason for experimentation. Experimentation before that time is wasting the flour and spoiling the batch of bread. Experimentation when the higher stage is reached depends upon the ability to see the things that have to be done and having the ability to apply the general principles involved in that work to the work that is in hand.

